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The Pharm Report

Prescription drugs can be deadly when abused. Here are some commonly abused drugs—and what they can do to you.

Class of Drug: Opioid (Painkiller)

Brand Names: OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet, Demerol

Prescribed for: Severe pain

How They Work: They affect the pleasure center of the brain. They block pain messages and cause drowsiness.

Warning! A large dose can kill you by slowing your breathing or stopping it altogether. Long-term use likely to lead to addiction. Mixing with alcohol can be fatal.

Class of Drug: Depressant

Brand Names: Xanax, Valium

Prescribed for: Anxiety, sleep disorders, stress, panic attacks

How They Work: They slow down normal brain function and make you feel sleepy.

Warning! They can slow your breathing and heartbeat to potentially fatal levels. Your body can become dependant on them. If you try to cut off use abruptly, you could have harmful seizures.

Class of Drug: Stimulant

Brand Names: Ritalin, Adderall, Dexedrine

Prescribed for: Attention deficit disorder (ADD), hyperactivity, narcolepsy

How They Work: Enhance brain activity, resulting in short-term alertness, attention, and energy.

Warning! They elevate blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration. These drugs can be extremely addictive.